

## **Position Statement on Hookah Use**

On the basis of available and overwhelming evidence, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services-Tobacco Prevention Program concludes that:

- 1) ALL tobacco products including hookah (argileh) are harmful to health, and the best health advice to tobacco users is to avoid and discontinue use of ALL tobacco products without exception;
- 2) The use of hookah brings with it the same serious health risks associated with all tobacco use, including exposure to secondhand smoke;
- 3) The use of hookah additionally carries the risk of transmission of many serious infectious diseases, including Tuberculosis, Hepatitis C and Helicobacter pylori, which causes stomach ulcers;
- 4) The novelty, flavors, and social nature of hookah smoking put youth at particular risk of tobacco addiction; and
- 5) Pregnant women and their children are at the same or higher risk of negative health outcomes associated with conventional tobacco use when using hookah.

## **Introduction**

Tobacco use remains the single leading preventable cause of death and disease in the United States and in Michigan.<sup>1</sup> Smoking in the United States results in an estimated 440,000 premature deaths annually, including 14,200 deaths in Michigan, yet individuals of all ages continue to use various tobacco products.<sup>2</sup> In 2013 an estimated 18.1% of adults in the United States were current smokers while in Michigan approximately 21.4% of adults smoke.<sup>3,4</sup>

## **What is the Hookah (Argileh)?**

Hookahs are water pipes that are used to smoke moist tobacco (shisha). The pipe consists of a bowl, plate, hollow pipe, gasket, valve, water jar, and hose. The moist tobacco is placed in the bowl atop the pipe, and burning charcoal is placed atop the tobacco. When the smoker inhales through the hose, the smoke passes from the heated tobacco through the water, generating a bubbling sound, and passes into the smoker's mouth and lungs.<sup>5</sup> In the U.S., hookah bars and cafes are rapidly becoming widespread and attract youth and young adults.<sup>6</sup> The tobacco smoked in the hookah comes in many flavors, such as apple, mango, chocolate, or candy flavors. In Michigan, hookahs are available in hookah lounges, gas stations, head shops, grocery stores, or on the internet. The average hookah session lasts 45-60 minutes, and is practiced as a social activity during which users often share the same hoses or mouthpieces.<sup>7</sup>

## **Health Concerns About Hookah**

- Hookah smoking is **NOT** a safe alternative to cigarette smoking. The chemicals contained in cigarettes are the same as those in hookah tobacco products. Additionally, the

charcoal used for heating the tobacco releases higher levels of carbon monoxide than cigarette smoke.<sup>8</sup>

- Hookah tobacco contains the addictive substance nicotine, as well as all of the health damaging and cancer-causing substances that are found in cigarettes and other tobacco products.<sup>8,9</sup>
- The water inside the hookah does **NOT** serve as a filter for tobacco's toxic substances. Instead, the water cools the tobacco smoke, so it feels less harsh, causing smokers to inhale more deeply and more often. This increases the smoker's exposure to toxic substances.<sup>7,10</sup>
- The smell, taste and smoothness of the sweetened tobacco mask the danger to the airways, also leading to longer, deeper inhalations and an increased exposure to toxic substances.<sup>7, 8</sup>
- Hookah smoking is associated with the same health problems caused by conventional tobacco use, including those caused by secondhand smoke exposure.
- Hookah is **NOT** safe for pregnant women or children.
- A typical 45-60 minute hookah session involves inhaling 100-200 times the volume of smoke and toxins inhaled from a single cigarette.<sup>11</sup>
- Insufficient sterilization of hookah components and sharing the same mouth piece, hose or bowl may pose a serious risk of transmission of infectious diseases such as Tuberculosis, Hepatitis C and Helicobacter pylori.<sup>12</sup>
- Hookah tobacco products are not regulated and most of them have no warning labels or ingredient labels.

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<sup>1</sup> CDC. Oct. 2007. *Best Practices for Comprehensive Tobacco Control Program*.

<sup>2</sup> Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids. "Toll of Tobacco in Michigan." 6/20/14.  
[http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts\\_issues/toll\\_us/michigan](http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/facts_issues/toll_us/michigan) Accessed 9/10/14.

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Current Cigarette Smoking Among Adults - United States, 2005-2012*. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 2014;63(02); 29-34. [http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6302a2.htm?s\\_cid=mmmm6302a2\\_w](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6302a2.htm?s_cid=mmmm6302a2_w) Accessed 9/10/2014.

<sup>4</sup> 2013 Michigan BRFSS Estimates. 7/7/14.

<sup>5</sup> Maziak W, Ward KD, Eissenberg T. "Tobacco smoking using a water pipe: a re-emerging strain in a global epidemic." *Tobacco Control*.2004; 13: 327-333.

<sup>6</sup> American Lung Association. *Tobacco Policy Alerts, An emerging Deadly Trend: Water pipe tobacco use*, Feb. 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Kandela P. "Nargile smoking keeps Arabs in Wonderland". *Lancet*. 2000; 356:1175.

<sup>8</sup> Shihadeh A, Saleh R. "Polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide, "tar", and nicotine in the mainstream smoke aerosol of the narghile water pipe." *Food and Chemical Toxicology*, 2005, 43(5): 655-661.

<sup>9</sup> Maziak W, Ward KD, Eissenberg T. "Factors related to frequency of narghile (water pipe) use: the first insights on tobacco dependence in narghile users." *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 2007, 76:101-106.

<sup>10</sup> Shafagoj YA, Mohammed FI. "Levels of maximum end-expiratory carbon monoxide and certain cardiovascular parameters following hubble-bubble smoking." *Saudi Medical Journal*, 2002, 23:953-958.

<sup>11</sup> World Health Organization. *WHO study group on Tobacco product regulation, advisory note: Water pipe Tobacco Smoking: Health Effects, Research Needs and Recommended actions by Regulators*. (2005) available at:  
<http://www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/en/>

<sup>12</sup> Knishkowsky B, Amitai Y. "Water-pipe (narghile) smoking: an emerging health risk behavior." *Pediatrics*, 2005, 116(1):e113-e119.